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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017) and 2401 (2018)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fifty-seventh submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system and obtained from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for October 2018.

II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points: October 2018

1. Following a period of relative calm in the second half of September, October saw increased hostilities in several locations in and around Idlib Governorate in the north-west of the country. While air strikes were not reported in the area in October, numerous incidents of shelling involving Government forces and non-State armed opposition groups took place. Civilians in the north-west also continued to be impacted by hostilities and tensions involving non-State armed opposition groups and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Levant Liberation Organization), and continued to face a range of protection threats.

2. Thousands of civilians were affected by an escalation of hostilities in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, where military operations against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continued in the Hajin enclave. Military operations

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continued to result in injury, death and displacement among the civilian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

3. Efforts to deploy an inter-agency aid convoy to the Rukban camp on the Syrian-Jordanian border, where up to 50,000 people faced an increasingly dire humanitarian situation, continued. A convoy planned for 27 October was postponed due to reported security threats. At least four children were reported to have died in the camp in October owing to a lack of access to adequate health care.

4. United Nations humanitarian agencies and their partners continued to reach millions of people in need. From inside the country, the United Nations reached more than 2.63 million people with food assistance. No inter-agency humanitarian convoys were deployed in October and the bimonthly inter-agency convoy plan for September and October was not approved by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. However, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners continued to reach people across the country through regular programming, including in several locations under Government control categorized as hard-to-reach. Cross-border assistance also remained an indispensable part of the response, with food assistance for some 583,000 people delivered by the United Nations from Turkey during October.

3. Since 24 February 2018, when the Security Council adopted resolution 2401 (2018), demanding a cessation of hostilities, military conflict has continued in parts of the Syrian Arab Republic. During the month of October, air strikes, artillery shelling or ground fighting were reported in the Governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, Hama and Dayr al-Zawr.

4. Following a period of relative calm in the second half of September, October saw an increase in hostilities in several areas in Aleppo, Hama and Idlib Governorates in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. While air strikes remained suspended, numerous incidents of shelling involving Government forces and non-State armed opposition groups were reported, with some taking place inside the demilitarized zone established under the agreement announced by the Russian Federation and Turkey on 17 September, in Sochi, Russian Federation (see S/2018/852). Civilian casualties were reported both in areas under the control of the Government and in areas under the control of non-State armed opposition groups. Areas affected included Aleppo city, Mari' and I'zaz in rural Aleppo Governorate, parts of southern and south-eastern Idlib Governorate and several locations in north-western Hama Governorate. Civilian displacement was reported following clashes between Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) (Levant Liberation Organization) and a non-State armed opposition group in and around Kafr Halab village in western rural Aleppo on 5 and 6 October, with some of the fighting taking place near a reception centre housing some 600 internally displaced people. Tensions between HTS and a non-State armed opposition group in Darat Izzah town on 26 September resulted in the closure of roads in the area.

5. A range of broader protection concerns persisted across the north-west of the country, including: kidnappings, several of which involved humanitarian and health-care workers; attacks involving improvised explosive devices; and other threats to civilians. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent reported that more than 1,600 internally displaced people returned to areas under Government control through the Abu al-Duhur crossing point between 23 and 29 October.

6. Thousands of civilians were impacted by an escalation of hostilities in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, where military operations against ISIL continued in the Hajin enclave. More than 10,000 civilians are estimated to remain in the enclave, where they faced growing needs and heavy movement restrictions. Women

and girls were reported to be most severely affected by a lack of basic services, including health care, water and sanitation. Living conditions for many of the 27,000 people estimated to have been displaced in the area since June also remained dire, with insecurity impeding efforts by humanitarian organizations to further scale up assistance, in particular in areas close to frontlines. Despite the challenges, assistance continued to be provided by United Nations partners in Kharayij and Bahrah during the reporting period.

7. Large numbers of civilian casualties due to air strikes were reported within the Hajin enclave, specifically in Hajin, Albu Badran and Susah towns, with women, children and Iraqi refugees among those killed. On 12 October, ISIL forces reportedly attacked a settlement of internally displaced persons in Hajin town. Subsequent satellite imagery indicated that more than half of the shelters at the site were destroyed. Satellite analysis also indicated that a total of 239 buildings appeared to have been damaged in Susah town between 10 September and 27 October, of which 54 were severely damaged and 90 were destroyed. Across Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, explosive hazards continued to pose a serious threat to civilians, with multiple injuries due to landmines and unexploded ordnance, of which several involved children.

8. Serious protection concerns relating to high levels of explosive hazard contamination also persisted in Raqqah city. An estimated 152,000 civilians have returned to the city since the end of major hostilities in October 2017, despite the risks. Humanitarian assistance in Raqqah has continued to be scaled up, through international and Syrian non-governmental organizations. During the reporting period, a mass grave containing more than 1,000 bodies was uncovered in Raqqah city.

9. The humanitarian situation of up to 50,000 people in the Rukban camp, on the Syrian-Jordanian border, continued to deteriorate during the reporting period. Food and other supplies became increasingly scarce. Health care remained a critical concern, with reports that at least four children died in the camp from 8 to 27 October of preventable conditions, owing to a lack of access to adequate health care. On 11 October, community leaders issued a public statement alleging constraints on the freedom of movement of displaced people in Rukban out of the camp, while several protests against conditions in the camp were also reported.

10. Following extensive discussions with representatives of the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, local communities and other interlocutors, agreement was reached that an inter-agency convoy would be deployed to the Rukban camp on 27 October to deliver aid and support the vaccination of children. However, on 26 October, it was deemed necessary to postpone the convoy owing to reported security threats. As at 31 October, discussions on the deployment of life-saving assistance to the area continued.

11. Internally displaced people continued to return to eastern Ghutah from sites in rural Damascus, which were reported to host just over 5,000 people as at late October. A large majority of the population remaining in the sites were men. The United Nations continued to provide food and other assistance at the sites and in eastern Ghutah itself, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and other partners. United Nations personnel continued to have limited access to eastern Ghutah.

12. Following concerns raised by humanitarian donors about charges being levied on empty vehicles travelling to pick up humanitarian supplies on the Syrian side of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Turkey and the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, and subsequent engagement by the United Nations with parties on the ground, on 1 October, the local administration in the area confirmed issuance of a waiver from road fees for all trucks supporting humanitarian deliveries. The so-called National Salvation Government issued a circular on 10 October prohibiting the

charging of fees against non-governmental organizations or transportation companies moving humanitarian commodities. No reports of such fees having continued were received following issuance of the circular.

13. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme (WFP) issued a special report[1] on 9 October, following a crop and food security assessment mission to the Syrian Arab Republic undertaken in June and July. The Mission reported a sharp decline in wheat production, with levels at their lowest since 1989 and around 30 per cent of the pre-conflict average of 4.1 million tonnes. The Mission estimated that 5.5 million Syrians remained in need of some form of food assistance. This figure did not include Idlib, where the Mission estimated that an additional 500,000 to 800,000 people may be food insecure.

14. Despite an escalation of hostilities in some locations in and around the so-called Idlib de-escalation area over the course of October, the 17 September memorandum between the Russian Federation and Turkey to establish a demilitarized zone in the area remained in place. In Istanbul on 27 October, the leaders of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Turkey jointly emphasized the importance of implementing confidence-building measures to contribute to the viability of the political process and a lasting ceasefire. The deadline of 15 October in the memorandum for the withdrawal of "radical terrorist groups" from the demilitarized zone was reportedly extended by the signatories.

15. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria continued his efforts to convene a United Nations-facilitated, constitutional committee in Geneva, in line with the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process mandated by Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). The Special Envoy engaged with senior government officials in Damascus on 24 October, with the leaders of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Turkey at their summit in Istanbul on 27 October and with representatives of the "Small Group" comprising Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States in London on 29 October. During the meetings, the Special Envoy continued to emphasize that the United Nations would convene only a committee that was inclusive, credible and balanced. He also noted the convening role of the United Nations, as mandated by resolution 2254 (2015) and reaffirmed in the final statement of the Congress of the Syrian national dialogue, held in Sochi, Russian Federation, in January 2018 (S/2018/121).

Protection

16. Despite a relative decrease in the intensity of violence, civilians across the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be severely affected by the direct and indirect consequences of hostilities. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. The number of civilian casualties and the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure remained a strong indication that the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution and, in particular, of the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks may not have been respected.

17. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and destroying and damaging vital infrastructure. Explosive hazard contamination in populated areas killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to

[1] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Special Report: FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic* (2018), available at www.fao.org/in-action/kore/news-and-events/news-details/en/c/1156568/.

the complexity of the explosive hazard threat and continued to hinder the work of humanitarian actors.

18. In Idlib Governorate and surrounding areas in Hama and Aleppo Governorates, numerous incidents of shelling by Government and allied forces and non-State armed opposition groups seriously affected civilians and their well-being. Ground-based strikes on 26 October hit a number of villages, killing at least seven civilians and injuring at least five others.

19. Infighting between various non-State armed opposition groups in areas in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates continued to result in death and injury to civilians, including several children. Lawlessness and criminality that included threats, intimidation, kidnapping and killing continued to be reported in Idlib Governorate and other areas in the north-west under the control of non-State armed opposition groups. Civilians also continued to be killed and injured by air strikes and ground-based strikes launched against ISIL-held areas in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. In one incident, on 19 October, civilians were killed when a mosque was hit by air strikes.

20. In Suwayda' Governorate, ISIL continued to hold hostage civilians abducted from Shubayki village in the east of the Governorate in July. A second of the 27 hostages was reportedly executed on 1 October. On 19 October, ISIL released six hostages — two women and four children.

21. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to document numerous incidents of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed by non-State armed opposition groups against civilians. Activists continued to be targeted and abducted for speaking out against abuses committed by various non-State armed opposition groups, while other civilians were abducted in order to extract ransoms. In one incident, the family of a head of a charity organization, originally abducted on 18 September, were sent pictures of him apparently being tortured after the family was unable to pay a ransom. Tens of men have been abducted since August, either for ransom or because of accusations of promoting reconciliation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The whereabouts and condition of many of these people remain unknown. In one incident, on 15 October, HTS fighters raided a village and reportedly abducted 12 civilian men from the same family. During the abduction, a 70-year-old man and his son were injured by gunfire, with the older man later dying of his injuries.

22. The United Nations received reports of multiple attacks on health-care personnel and facilities during the reporting period. On 10 October, the head of the Central Surgery Department of the Idlib Health Directorate was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle on the Kafraya road in Fu'ah, in central Idlib Governorate. On 31 October, the Health Directorate and a non-governmental organization announced the suspension of services in the Amal hospital in Huraytan, in northern rural Aleppo Governorate, for a three-day period, owing to repeated attacks on medical facilities in the area. In addition, the United Nations received reports of the detonation of an improvised explosive device under an ambulance parked near Basirah Hospital, in Dayr al-Zawr city. No casualties were reported in the incident.

23. Several verified reports were also received by the United Nations of attacks on schools and other interference with education during the reporting period. The Kurdish Self Administration in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic banned education through Arabic in more than 250 government schools from late September onwards. Some families were reported to have relocated or sent their children to other locations to ensure continued access to education through Arabic. From 8 October onwards, Kurdish Self Administration police at checkpoints prevented vehicles

transporting children to schools in areas controlled by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Qamishli city from doing so.

24. On 24 October, a United Nations-supported school in Kafr Hamra in Aleppo was shelled. As the incident took place at night, no casualties were reported, but the resulting damage meant that the school remained closed for several days. On 21 October, Sana Al Rabis school in Idlib was impacted by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonation in a nearby neighbourhood. As the incident took place at night it resulted in material damage only. The United Nations also received reports of the alleged targeting of a primary school in Jarabulus district in Aleppo Governorate in an improvised explosive device attack. No casualties were reported.

Humanitarian access

Box 2
Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian assistance provided from within the Syrian Arab Republic by United Nations agencies based in the country to regularly accessible locations in Government-controlled areas reached more than 2.63 million people with food assistance.

2. Although 1.16 million people remained in hard-to-reach areas, no inter-agency convoys have been approved since 16 August, and the September–October convoy plan was not approved by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2393 (2017), remained a vital part of the humanitarian response. In October, 375 trucks (14 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 1.3 million people through cross-border deliveries, including food assistance for some 583,000 people. United Nations humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended in October.

25. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached millions of people in need, including women and children, through all available access routes, including (a) humanitarian operations from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; (b) cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and (c) cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those in need from neighbouring countries (see table 2). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

26. The Syrian authorities have stated that areas under the control of the Government should now be reached through regular programming modalities. At the same time, they have indicated that they would facilitate a greater number of missions and authorize increased deployment of United Nations personnel with convoys to these areas. The United Nations is ensuring that locations that have recently come under Government control are included in monthly regular programme requests, while maintaining that some hard-to-reach locations should continue to be targeted through the inter-agency convoy modality. On 31 October, the United Nations

submitted its plans for access via inter-agency convoys to six hard-to-reach locations in November and December, with a view to reaching 352,400 people in need in these areas.

27. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations across the country. Such deliveries are undertaken by United Nations agencies based in Damascus to regularly accessible areas. In October, all 1,969 official requests submitted by WFP to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations across the country were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 54 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved. UNHCR reached more than 2.8 million people with multisectoral support. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reached more than 1.1 million children and mothers with primary health-care and immunization services. In addition, an estimated 248,700 children and pregnant and lactating women were provided with complementary feeding and micronutrient supplementation. Some 171,600 children benefited from education supplies and services, school rehabilitation and textbooks, and 176,500 children benefited from protection and psychosocial support services. Nearly 290,000 people were reached with reproductive health and gender-based violence services supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its partners. Approximately 3.2 million people received food assistance through both cross-border and regular deliveries, and around 805,500 people benefited from water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies.

Table 1
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, October 2018

Organization	*Number of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	[illegible]500
International Organization for Migration	37[illegible]000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 825 000
United Nations Children's Fund	2 [illegible]00 000
United Nations Development Programme	1 [illegible]00 000
United Nations Population Fund	28[illegible] 400
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	17[illegible] 700
World Food Programme	3 20[illegible] 100
World Health Organization	86[illegible] 000

28. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (see figure and table 2). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

29. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations as authorized under resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017). During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored the delivery of 14 consignments by seven United Nations agencies, consisting of 375 trucks, from three border crossings: eight from Bab al-Hawa (329 trucks), five from Bab al-Salam (42 trucks) and one from Ya'rubiyah (4 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the

consignments sent. The United Nations provided 48-hour notice to the Government regarding all shipments. Once in the country, United Nations partners ensured that shipments arrived at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensured independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitored the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

30. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted more than 888 cross-border consignments, with more than 22,438 trucks (15,436 through Bab al-Hawa and 2,349 through Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,605 through Ramtha from Jordan; and 48 through Ya'rubiyah from Iraq). Those operations complement and support the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

31. During the reporting period, humanitarian cross-border operations through Jordan remained suspended. However, WFP and its implementing partners delivered food assistance to some 583,000 people from the two authorized cross-border entry points with Turkey. The World Health Organization also conducted health and medical deliveries, providing treatment for more than 273,000 people through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF delivered winter kits, child protection assistance, nutrition, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies through a number of cross-border shipments. Around 211,000 health supplies were distributed, reaching over 1.8 million people. Over 16,000 children under the age of 5, as well as pregnant and lactating women, were reached with micronutrient supplies. More than 16,000 children under the age of 5, as well as pregnant and lactating women, were screened for acute malnutrition; of them, 374 severely malnourished children received appropriate treatment.

32. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. By the end of October, 1,516,810 individuals were reached through protection interventions, including 1,129,283 individuals reached with general protection activities, 226,127 individuals reached with child protection activities, and 161,400 individuals reached through awareness-raising campaigns on prevention and response activities relating to sexual and gender-based violence in 12 governorates. As at the end of October 2018, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stands at 97 community centres, 14 satellite centres and 92 mobile units, supported by 2,340 outreach volunteers. This network provided protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence, livelihood services and services for persons with specific needs, to benefit some 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, members of host communities and other crisis-affected people across 12 Syrian governorates. As at October, 53,192 internally displaced persons in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Suwayda', Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Tartus, Ladhiqiyah, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Hasakah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates benefited from the UNHCR legal assistance programme, including some 2,000 internally displaced persons from eastern Ghutah (Rif Dimashq) and 581 from Afrin (Aleppo Governorate). Moreover, UNFPA reached more than 285,000 people, carrying out activities relating to reproductive health and the prevention of and response to gender-based violence and youth-related violence. Also during the reporting period, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) launched the third round of cash distributions. A total of 279,116 Palestine refugees each received $46. This third round of cash distributions is expected to be completed in early December. Owing to the financial crisis faced by

the Agency, the number of rounds of cash distribution has decreased to three rounds over 2018 as opposed to the six rounds planned in the UNRWA Emergency Appeal.

Figure

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, by cluster, October 2018

(Thousands)

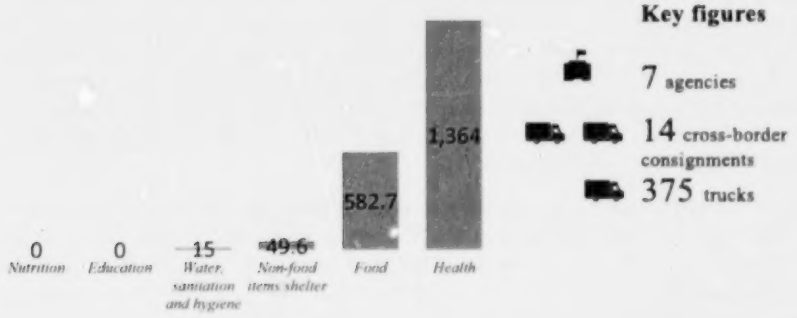

Table 2

Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries, by sector and by district, October 2018

Governorate	*District*	*Education*	*Food*	*Health*	*Non-food items shelter*	*Nutrition*	*Water, sanitation and hygiene*
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	78 635	83 750	4 500	–	–
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	247 880	35 910	6 600	–	–
Hasakah	Quamishli	–	–	53 733	1 200	–	–
Hama	Muhradah	–	–	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arrah	–	72 500	26 710	5 160	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	30 000	32 010	5 000	–	5 000
Idlib	Harim	–	95 255	1 085 942	17 152	–	–
Idlib	Idlib	–	58 385	44 620	10 000	–	10 000
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	–	1 500	–	–	–

33. The Russian Federation sent informational bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

34. A total of 73 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government in October. Of those, 43 were approved, 29 remained pending as at 31 October (it being noted that some were submitted late in the reporting period) and one was rejected. Of the 47 previously submitted visa applications that remained pending at the beginning of the reporting period, 42 were approved in October, 3 remained pending and 2 were rejected. A total of 83 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in October, of which 47 were approved and 36 remained pending as at 31 October (it being noted that some were submitted late in the reporting

period). Of the 50 previously submitted visa renewal requests that remained pending at the beginning of the reporting period, 48 were approved, 1 was rejected and 1 remained pending.

35. A total of 24 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

36. Agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetrical attacks. As a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, significant populated areas became highly contaminated with unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and landmines, which pose an elevated risk to the implementation of humanitarian activities in those areas.

37. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of UNRWA; 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations have also reportedly been killed.

38. A total of 28 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme, 1 staff member of the United Nations Population Fund and 26 UNRWA staff members) were detained or missing as at the end of the reporting period.

III. Observations

39. I am alarmed by the increase in hostilities and their impact on civilians in the north-west of the country during the current reporting period, including in areas understood to lie within the demilitarized zone established under the 17 September agreement by the Russian Federation and Turkey. The lives and well-being of millions of civilians continue to depend on the parties' respect for the rules of war and on efforts to ensure de-escalation in Idlib and the surrounding areas. I urge all parties to redouble their efforts to avoid a military battle in Idlib, which would risk setting off a spiral of human suffering at a scale not yet seen in this terrible conflict, with potential implications across the region.

40. I am extremely concerned at reports of civilian casualties due to air strikes in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, where more than 10,000 people remain effectively trapped in areas controlled by ISIL.

41. I also condemn continued attacks and threats against civilians, as well as restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement, by ISIL, HTS and other non-State armed opposition groups in Dayr al-Zawr, Idlib and elsewhere. All parties to the conflict must respect international humanitarian law, including the fundamental duty to respect and protect civilians. Violations cannot be tolerated. Human rights must also be respected, protected and fulfilled.

42. I have frequently highlighted the importance of humanitarian access to the Rukban camp and am hopeful that discussions on further deployments of an aid convoy to the area, in addition to the convoy that delivered assistance in early November, will also lead to more sustained humanitarian support for people in this remote area. I reiterate that safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access

is critical, for people in need in Rukban and across the Syrian Arab Republic. Reports of the deaths of children in Rukban in recent weeks are an unacceptable result of limited humanitarian access.

43. In the north-west of the country, life-saving humanitarian aid has continued to be delivered across the Syrian-Turkish border, allowing humanitarian organizations to respond to current needs and to prepare for the continuing risk of a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation. Many people also continue to be reached in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic from Iraq with life-saving items that would not otherwise be available. The humanitarian nature of cross-border assistance continues to be verified by the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, and its deliveries are confirmed on the ground by third-party monitors and through other means. The importance of the renewal of the modalities set out under resolution 2165 (2014) and subsequent resolutions, which support the provision of assistance to those in need through the most direct routes — including across borders — cannot be overstated at the current juncture. The United Nations does not have an alternative means of reaching people in need in these areas.

44. Continuing impunity for alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict remains of grave concern. I call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, in particular by providing relevant information and documentation. I reiterate that accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is also central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

45. In view of serious ongoing concerns repeatedly raised by OHCHR with regard to the protection of civilians and other human rights issues in the Syrian Arab Republic, I continue to strongly urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with Human Rights Council resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights.

46. I fully support my Special Envoy in his efforts to verify the feasibility of convening a credible constitutional committee that could provide a cornerstone for implementing the inclusive political process mandated by resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. I count on all parties to support my Special Envoy as he pursues this effort. I reiterate that the goal of the United Nations is to end the suffering of the Syrian people and to find a sustainable and peaceful solution to the conflict through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Annex

Reported incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2018*

Suwayda' Governorate

- On 1 October, ISIL reportedly executed a second hostage from among the 27 civilians abducted from Shubayki village in eastern Suwayda' Governorate on 25 July. Video footage circulated on social media on 2 October, depicting two members of ISIL shooting and killing a woman believed to be the hostage from Shubayki. Local sources confirmed the execution and identity of the woman. The execution was reportedly in retaliation for the ongoing Government offensive against ISIL positions in the area of Tulul al-Safa, east of Suwayda'.
- On 19 October, ISIL released six hostages — two women and four children — reportedly in exchange for the release of 17 ISIL women who were in the custody of the Government.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 5 October, heavy clashes took place in the early morning in the village of Kafr Halab in Atarib district in south-west Aleppo Governorate, killing a girl and injuring a boy from the same family in their home. The same day, HTS opened fire on civilians protesting the killing of the two siblings, killing one protester and leaving seven others injured.
- On 19 October, a male civilian was reportedly killed and at least 10 others, including children, were injured as a result of what were alleged to be ground-based strikes on several neighbourhoods in Government-controlled Aleppo city, including Zahra', Halab al-Jadidah and Sabil neighbourhoods.
- On 22 October, four male civilians were reportedly injured as a result of ground-based strikes on opposition-controlled Bab city, in north-east Aleppo city.
- On 23 October, at least seven civilians were injured as a result of what were alleged to be ground-based strikes on A'zamiyah, Akramiyah and Sayf al-Dawlah neighbourhoods in Government-controlled areas of Aleppo city.
- On 24 October, a five-year old girl was killed and at least three other civilians injured in opposition-controlled Kafr Hamra in western rural Aleppo, as a result of alleged ground-based strikes.

Idlib Governorate

- On 1 October, a civilian man was injured by what was reported to be a roadside improvised explosive device that detonated in Saraqib city, in eastern Idlib Governorate. The device was reported to have targeted a local HTS leader.

* In line with Security Council resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of incidents that are reported to have occurred during the month relates to compliance with Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Cessation of Hostilities of the International Syria Support Group. The list of incidents gives examples of human rights issues of concern raised in the report. However, owing to the changing patterns of conflict and the loss of networks of credible and/or reliable sources in many conflict-affected areas, verifying incidents is increasingly difficult. The list contains only those incidents that were reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and have been verified according to its methodology, and should not be considered comprehensive.

- On 2 October, HTS fighters raided the homes of two activists from Kansafrah in Ariha district, in rural eastern Idlib Governorate, and detained them. Sources on the ground reported that the activists were detained for their active role in organizing demonstrations and for being critical of HTS. One of them was released on 9 October. The whereabouts of the second remain unknown.

- On 10 October, a civilian man was killed and two others were injured after Ahrar al-Sham fighters raided a house in Tah town in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man district, Idlib Governorate. They were reportedly looking for a man alleged to be collaborating with the Government forces.

- On 11 October, an activist was detained by HTS fighters in Idlib city following a series of posts on social media criticizing restrictive measures imposed by the "Salvation Government" as well as HTS targeting of activists. The activist was released the same day after signing a paper committing him to refrain from spreading "false accusations" against HTS.

- On 12 October, an activist working with a local non-governmental organization in the village of Atimah, in, northern rural Idlib Governorate, was abducted by armed men believed to belong to HTS while on his way to a mosque. The organization reportedly decided to suspend its activities in Atimah until he is released. His whereabouts remain unknown.

- On 13 October, unidentified masked armed men reportedly abducted a civilian man at the gate of his house in the centre of Idlib city. The abductee was released on 15 October, reportedly in exchange for a ransom.

- On 13 October, an unknown armed group claiming to be part of HTS security reportedly raided a shop in Thabit neighbourhood in Idlib city and abducted its owner. The whereabouts of the abductee remain unknown.

- On 15 October, a group of HTS fighters raided Ayn al-Arus village in Ariha district, west of Jabal al-Zawiyah, and reportedly detained 12 civilian men, all from the same family. During the raid, the HTS fighters reportedly fired gunshots, injuring two of those detained — a 70-year-old man working as a farmer, as well as his son. The older man died as a result of his wounds shortly after the raid and his body was then returned to the family. His wife was also injured when she was hit by one of the fighters.

- On 21 October, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded in the vicinity of the Rawdah Mosque in Qusur neighbourhood in Idlib city, reportedly killing three civilians, including an 8-year-old child, and injuring 13 others, including one woman. The explosion occurred near a mosque in a heavily populated area and caused significant structural damage around the area, including to some shops and residential buildings.

- On 21 October, the head of a Syrian charity abducted by unknown armed male fighters in Sahyan village, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, on 18 September (previously reported), was released. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom from his family. The circumstances surrounding his release remain unknown.

- On 23 October, 2 civilian men were killed and 10 others were injured as a result of armed clashes which broke out between HTS and the National Liberation Front around the village of Jarjanaz, east of the town of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, in southern Idlib Governorate.

- On 26 October, Government forces and their allies resumed ground-based strikes on villages across Idlib. Seven civilians were reportedly killed in the strikes and at least five others injured. The strikes mainly affected the village of Ruffah, in eastern rural Idlib, where six civilians, three children, two women

and one man, were killed, and the village of Bdama, in Jisr al-Shughur, western Idlib, where one civilian man was killed.

Homs Governorate

- On 6 October, a 58-year-old woman, internally displaced from Tadmur (Palmyra), reportedly died in the Rukban camp near the Syrian-Jordanian border owing to a lack of access to adequate health care.
- On 8 October, a 16-month-old boy from Qaryatayn in Homs died in the Rukban camp as a result of complications caused by severe malnutrition.
- On 27 October, an eight-month-old boy in the Rukban camp suffering from hepatitis A died after his medical condition deteriorated.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 19 October, the Othman Ibn Affan mosque (previously called the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq mosque) in Albu Badran village in Susah town, eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, was allegedly hit with what were reported to be airstrikes, resulting in dozens of casualties. According to interviews conducted by OHCHR, the airstrikes hit the mosque after the sunset (Maghrib) prayer, reportedly killing dozens of people, including a number of men believed to be ISIL affiliates. OHCHR was able to obtain the names of six civilians, including two women who were reportedly killed while walking in close proximity to the mosque. OHCHR is not currently in a position to confirm the total number of civilians killed in these air strikes and whether or not the rest of reported casualties were affiliates of ISIL. OHCHR continues to gather information concerning the airstrikes on Albu Badranand other parts of Susah town.
- On 19 October, ground-based strikes hit Susah town, reportedly injuring three civilians.
- On 21 October, airstrikes hit a house in Susah town where ISIL fighters were allegedly present, reportedly resulting in the killing of five civilians, four (including two women) who lived in a nearby house, and another woman who was reportedly passing by on the street with her child. The woman's child was injured.